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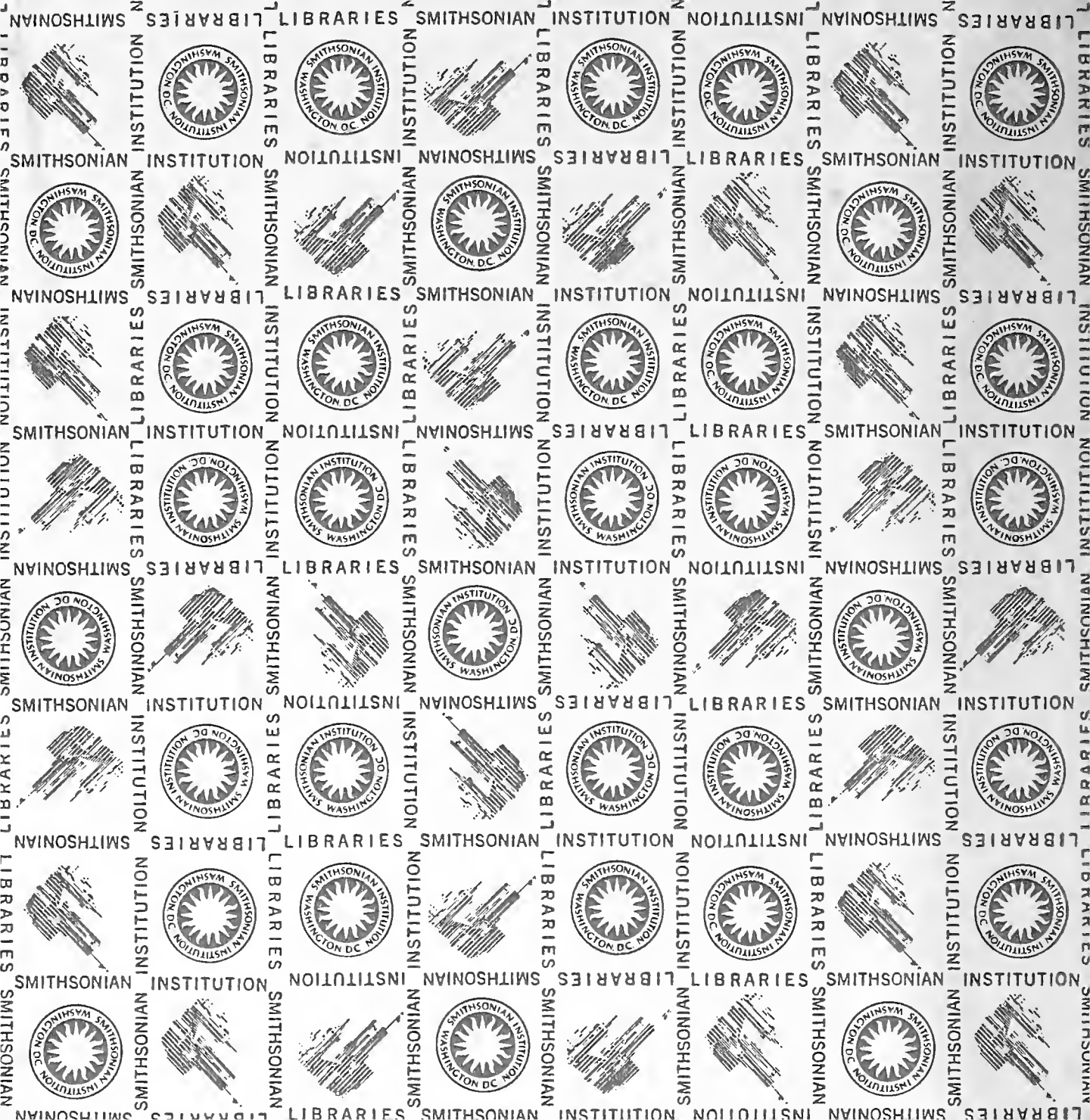
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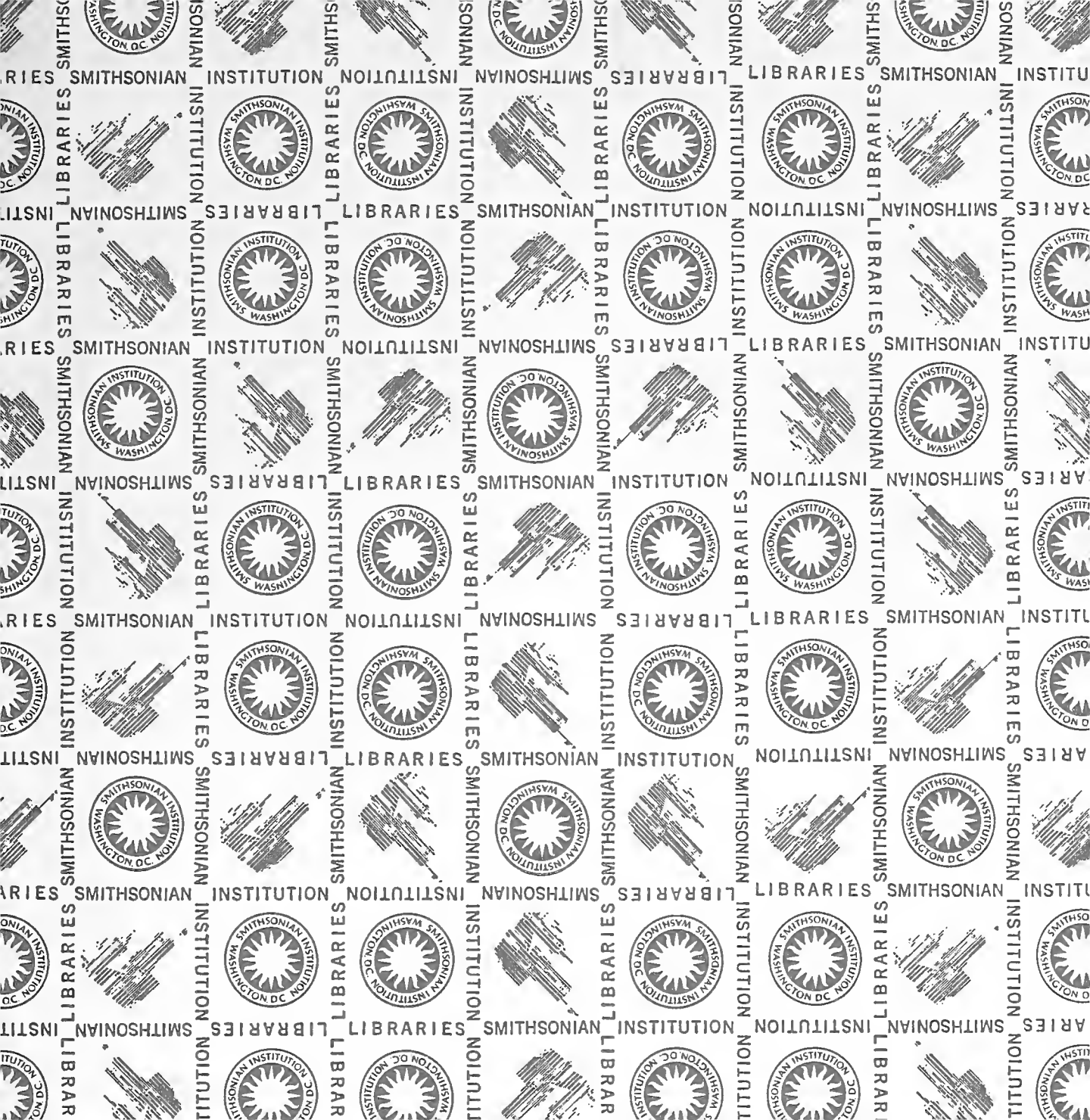
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Japanese Woodblock Prints

Cooper-Hewitt Library

in the Collection of
the Cooper-Hewitt
Museum

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The Smithsonian
Institution's National
Museum of Design

Cover:

Totoya Hokkei (1780–1850)

***Surimono*: Costume for the *Shibaraku* Interlude**

About 1850

Kakuban; 21.5 x 18.4 cm.

Purchase, Friends of the Museum

Fund, 1969–150–1

The word *kabuki* can be interpreted as a drama combining words and music, dance and movement, all skillfully executed. At first the plays were performed for commoners, townsmen, and merchants, for Noh plays were given only for the nobility. Eventually the audience included members of all classes of society. Kabuki spoke a language that could be readily understood and its subject matter was drawn from contemporary life or famous historical events.

The costumes, gorgeous and elaborate, the huge revolving stage, and the *hanamachi* (flower walk), a platform that extended from the stage to the rear of the auditorium, contributed to the excitement and magnificence of the performance.

One of the most highly dramatic episodes of Kabuki is the *Shibaraku*, which can be translated as “Wait a Moment.” It is reminiscent of the *Deus ex machina* of western theater, for at the moment when the hero seems doomed, or evil is about to vanquish good, an intercessor rushes forward saying “Shibaraku” and the action is reversed. Hokkei’s composition of casually strewn parts of the costume, still billowing slightly, suggests the idea of momentary action.

The costume for *Shibaraku* typically is an outer robe of exaggerated proportions and long trailing trousers. The robes shown in Hokkei’s print bear Ichikawa Danjūrō V’s oversized, square-shaped crest. His family’s interpretation of the role was unrivalled for generations.

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Japanese
Woodblock
Prints

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The Smithsonian
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Andō Hiroshige (1797–1858)

Mandarin Ducks Walking on Ice

From a series of Birds and Flowers

About 1832–1834

Chu-tanzaku, 37.8 x 13 cm.

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Robert H.
Patterson, 1941–31–157

Snow, moon, and flowers are traditionally the three friends of Japanese artists and poets. The appropriate verse reads:

The water is the *oshidori's* [duck's] loving cup.
Love melts all barriers as quickly as
the thin ice thaws on the ground.

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Foreword

Woodblock printing, an ancient craft, rose to its greatest heights in Japan during the period from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. The color prints of this time, made for a discerning mass public, were highly stylized. In some respects similar in restriction to the Japanese seventeen-syllable haiku poems, they show equal individuality and variety.

"Pictures of the Floating World," or *ukiyo-e* prints as they are called, depict everyday life — legends, fashions, manners, vices — and are immensely appealing. The Cooper-Hewitt Museum has a collection of over 500 such prints, which charmingly capture historical events, festivals, and other commemorative occasions; courtship and domestic life; exquisite landscapes, flowers, birds, and insects; important actors, warriors, wrestlers, geishas, and courtesans — a strange, lost world.

Van Gogh, Gauguin, Manet, Degas, Toulouse-Lautrec and many other important Western artists were influenced by *ukiyo-e* prints. In all of us, they evoke a brilliant and delightful image of old Japan.

Lisa Taylor
Director
Cooper-Hewitt Museum



The earliest known examples of woodblock printing in Japan date from the eighth century. They are relics of a printing feat of considerable magnitude, for the Empress Shōtoku, to appease the rebellious Buddhist priesthood, ordered the printing of one million charms, each to be placed in a specially made, miniature, wooden pagoda. Groups of these graceful containers with their charms were deposited in the most important temples of the day.

When the Chinese invented paper, shortly after 100 A.D., they immediately began to print words on it, using stamps of the same kind as those used to impress designs on clay wall tiles. At this time Chinese civilization was one of the most advanced in the world, and certainly the dominant culture in the far east. Japan received from China, through Korea, the foundation of her civilization — science, art, literature, religion, and even a system of government. Buddhism came to Japan in the middle of the sixth century, and it was in connection with Buddhism that printing in Japan was first realized, for only the temples had the means to undertake the time-consuming labor of carving and printing the long Buddhist texts.

The earliest form of printed illustration was also connected with Buddhism. These were the “stamped Buddha” (*im-butsu*), three- or four-inch high impressions on paper or cloth made with ink and a seal or stamp, and “printed Buddha” (*suributsu*), made with ink and a carved woodblock. Their primary purpose was devotional rather than artistic, as merit was gained in the making of them. Rows of these Buddha images were stamped or printed in large numbers on sheets or rolls of paper, the more images, the better. In general, printed Buddhist texts were regarded as utilitarian and illustrations were considered unnecessary. As popular sects more concerned with reaching the people evolved, illustrations to the texts came to play a functional role.

Buddhist domination of printing came to an end in the seventeenth century when Buddhism went into decline — its doctrine stagnant and its temples impoverished by the long civil wars. With the rise of a new, highly literate class drawn from the samurai and the court nobility, books were produced on diverse secular topics such as Chinese philosophy, military strategy and weaponry, botany, medicine, and agriculture, as well as fiction. The main publishing centers were in the capital city of Kyoto, Edo (now Tokyo), and

Ōsaka. The increased breadth of subject matter was a boon to the book illustrators. As the publishing industry boomed, the market grew to include many who could not read and who wanted books with pictures. It was not long before Edo artists began to abandon book illustration in favor of publishing albums and single-sheet prints.

The heyday of woodblock printing in Japan occurred in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and it flourished most brilliantly in Edo. The prints illustrated here are called *ukiyo-e* (floating world) because they record the ephemeral parade of life, and in particular, its pleasures. Their point of view has been described in a novel by Asai Ryōi, *Tales of the Floating World* (*Ukiyo Monogatari*): "Living only for the moment, the snow, the cherry blossoms and the maple leaves; singing songs, drinking wine, diverting ourselves in just floating, floating. . . ."

At the beginning of the eighteenth century various economic changes implicit in the shift from an agricultural to a mercantile economy brought townspeople to a position of real importance. The samurai, or warrior class, maintained their social standing, but the merchants had most of the money and most of the fun. They found their

amusement in theaters, restaurants, wrestling matches, baths, and brothels. They mingled freely with the inhabitants of this entertaining world, who were contained within a special area of each large city. In Edo the district was named Yoshiwara. The speed of production and wide availability of the woodblock print provided a perfect vehicle to record fleeting, happy moments and to preserve the memory of a favored person's appearance. Artists benefited from the new patrons who were less hampered by convention and uninhibited by tradition. Until this time, Japanese art had rarely escaped from Chinese influence, chiefly because the patrons were limited to the nobility, a class whose foundation of learning was Chinese. *Ukiyo-e* prints, however, can be called truly native art, for their subject matter was drawn directly from Japanese life and their printing techniques were developed in Japan.

Although the imperial capital remained in Kyoto in the eighteenth century, the monarchy was, in fact, powerless and Japan was ruled by a military dictator (*shōgun*) who governed from Edo. Since the nobles (*daimyō*) were required to spend part of every year in attendance at the shogun's court, the city was flooded with people and became the center for a middle class of tradesmen,

artisans, merchants, writers, entertainers, and the pleasure-loving. Nearly all of the prints in the Cooper-Hewitt collection are by Edo printmakers.

The evolution from a simple *sumi* (lampblack) ink print to the full color print called *nishiki* (literally "brocade," because of its many rich colors) took a century to unwind. At first, the black ink prints were colored by hand, most often in orange-red and yellow (*tan*). The next development was that another variety of red was used (*beni*), sometimes along with a black ink mixed for luster with lacquer or glue and embellished with scattered gold dust or brass filings. These prints were called *urushi-e*. Okamura Masanobu (1686-1764) is credited with introducing the method of printing of colors with blocks (*benizuri-e*), rather than applying them by hand, but with only two colors, red and green predominating. Finally, Suzuki Harunobu (1724-1770) played a major role in the development of the full color print about 1764.

The technique is demanding and requires the cooperation of four people: the designer, engraver, printer, and publisher. First the artist draws his design with a brush and black ink on thin, tough paper made from plant

6 fibers. The paper is glued to a block of fine, hard wood of uniform texture. The wood has been cut with the grain, seasoned, and planed. The engraver, using a panoply of chisels and blades, excavates the unnecessary portions, leaving the areas to be printed at surface level. This completed block is the key block. Black and white impressions taken from it serve for the cutting of the additional blocks, one for each color, or shade of color. To keep the colors in register during the printing of the several blocks, two marks are carved on the edge of each to guide in maintaining exact margins. After the blocks are inked, moistened paper is placed on them and rubbed with a *baren* made of a paper pad and coiled bamboo cord sheathed in a bamboo leaf. Early inks were made with vegetable and mineral dyes, and it is the opinion of many connoisseurs that the substitution of aniline dyes in the later prints contributed to the decline of the art of woodblock printing because the colors lack subtlety.

Surimono prints are distinctive because of their size and shape (small, almost square), their purpose, and their technical refinement. They were commissioned by clients who wished to distribute them to friends, and were specially favored for new year's greetings. They

were also made to celebrate a birth or marriage, to commemorate a new membership in a poetry club, to give notice of an author's or artist's change of name, or to publish verses of poetry club members. The prints were carefully designed and produced with enriching effects like metallic inks and *gauffrage* (*kimokome*, "blind" printing with an uninked block).

Hashira-e (or *hashirakake*), pillar prints, are long and narrow, their shape deriving from the wooden pillars they were made to decorate. *Ukiyo-e* artists proved themselves equal to the challenge of designing pleasing compositions for this difficult format.

Japanese collectors of *ukiyo-e* have traditionally preferred the earlier – seventeenth and eighteenth-century – prints. A parallel in the history of western taste might be found in the rejection until recent years of the work of mannerist artists in comparison to early or high renaissance masters. It cannot be denied that the enormous popular demand for prints in nineteenth-century Japan had an adverse effect on some artists. For example, the later work of Kunisada coarsened, and the individual compositions lost focus as his prints were churned out in too great numbers and in too great haste. The

brilliant colors of the later prints appealed strongly to westerners, who found them lively and gay. Japanese connoisseurs, traditionally more conservative in their personal tastes, found the soft yellows and greens of the early prints more desirable. Westerners, both aided and hampered by their inability to read the inscriptions or to understand the frequently obtuse literary allusions in which the cultured Japanese delighted, could accept the prints solely on the basis of their beautiful images.

The difficulties encountered in the identification of artist and subject matter of *ukiyo-e* are multiple. Documents that might establish birth and death dates are usually lacking, and the biographies of well known artists are often based on legends that cannot be substantiated. No single problem is more baffling than that of Japanese artists' names. This is partly due to the variations possible in transliteration, but also relates to the common Japanese practice of name changing. As Laurance Roberts explains in his *A Dictionary of Japanese Artists*, p. ix):

"As regard surnames, in old Japan the situation was much the same as in medieval Europe: only the highest classes or the specially privileged were allowed the distinction. Not until 1870 were commoners permitted to adopt family names. But unlike the Westerner, the Japanese has always been willing to change his name for another be-

cause, among other reasons, he has changed his profession or has been adopted by someone else. In the world of art, the great family names of Kanō, Tosa, Utagawa, Torii, and others were clearly and firmly handed down, not only to the direct heirs but also to deserving and particularly talented pupils who were sometimes even allowed to use the family name to show they had been accepted into the school if not always adopted into the family itself. Very often, therefore, the artist will have had another name than the one by which he has come down in history. In the beginning the artists were generally either members of the aristocracy or the Buddhist priesthood and would use either a *nom de plume* known as an *azana* (art name) which was often no more than an alternate reading of the artist's given name, or a *gō*, often in the form of an elaborate literary pun. While some artists were satisfied with a single *gō*, many felt the need for a different name for each aspect of their work, and some found they could use several score."

For instance, the artist we know as Hiroshige is most often referred to as Andō Hiroshige, Utagawa Hiroshige, or Ichiryūsai Hiroshige. *Andō* refers to the Andō family by whom he was adopted; his own father, who died when Hiroshige was twelve, is identified by some scholars as a member of the Tanaka family. *Utagawa* refers to the Utagawa school or fraternity of painters, a name bestowed upon Hiroshige when he was fifteen and had just completed his studies with Utagawa Toyohiro. In fact, the name Hiroshige appears for the first time on the diploma given him by Toyohiro.

Ichiryūsai is one of the several *gō* (artist's names) which Hiroshige used during his lifetime. Katsushika (originally Nakajima) Hokusai used over fifty *gō* in the course of his long life.

Because of the method of training artists, there was a continuity of style from one generation to another. A pupil accepted by one of the masters worked as an apprentice in a trade, following the master's instructions and turning out pictures that resembled the master's as closely as possible. Reverence for the master was so deeply felt that pupils claimed the right to sign the master's name instead of their own if they considered themselves worthy. The greater artists, of course, soon revealed their own individuality even if their beginnings were influenced by the teacher's style.

Among the most talented artists represented in the Cooper-Hewitt collection is Katsukawa Shunshō, who exerted wide influence as a teacher. His many actor prints were admired because of his ability to capture individual personal characteristics while at the same time creating finely balanced abstract compositions. The forms of the figures and the stage properties play against each other to build tension that anticipates dramatic action.

Katsushika Hokusai was one of Shunshō's many pupils. His work has survived the test of time and seems vital and inventive today. Restless, almost bohemian in his habits, he constantly changed his residence as well as his name. His best known and most masterful prints are the views of Mt. Fuji, a series begun when he was seventy years old. The great landscapes are considered to be the pinnacle of his career, and Hokusai in his journal, said of this period of his life: "I finally apprehended something of the true quality of birds, animals, insects, fish and of the vital nature of grasses and trees." In large part his appeal for us is in his imagination and humor.

The second great *ukiyo-e* landscapist was Andō Hiroshige who was born nearly forty years after Hokusai. Their prints vary markedly in mood and execution — Hokusai's are explosive, full of energy, and basically linear; Hiroshige's quiet and poetic, conceived in large planes of flat color. Hiroshige exhibited his artistic inclinations as an adolescent and began to concentrate on landscapes when he was about thirty years old. His enormous production of prints shows great technical virtuosity and his delightful scenes were more responsible than those of any other artist for the westerner's view of Japan. The

8 universal favorite is his series devoted to the Tōkaidō road, printed in the 1830s. these were produced from drawings Hiroshige made in the course of his own journey down the road in the procession of the shogun. He spent much of his life traveling around Japan, and many other landscape prints resulted, along with charming prints of birds and flowers, and fish.

Totoya Hokkei was one of Katsushika Hokusai's most faithful pupils. His production of single sheet woodcuts was limited but he illustrated some forty books and his many illustrations for satirical poems and *surimono* reveal an able draftsman.

Utagawa Toyokuni and his numerous pupils dominated the *ukiyo-e* scene well past the mid-nineteenth century. Born the son of a woodcarver, print designing was a natural step for Toyokuni. His work is divided almost equally between depictions of beautiful women and portraits of actors. Several of his pupils are represented in the Cooper-Hewitt collections, among them Utagawa Kuninaga, a book illustrator and lantern painter as well as a print maker, who was strongly influenced by western art, and Utagawa Kuniyoshi, an erratic artist with a taste for fantasy. Another was Utagawa Kunisada, a prolific artist

who produced well over 10,000 prints during his active sixty-year career. He also illustrated dozens of novels, including Ryūtei Tanehiko's most famous work, *Nise Murasaki Inaka Genji* (The Pseudo-Murasaki's Country Genji). 160 volumes, 1829–1842.

Kunisada's work, particularly the actor prints that were his specialty, was extremely popular with the mass audience. His pupil and son-in-law, Ichiusai Kuniyoshi, was also his collaborator, usually in providing the landscape backgrounds for Kunisada's figures. The production of all of these Edo artists was prodigious and each had pupils, many of whom designed thousands of prints as well.

With the twentieth century, the influences from the west became more apparent. Kawase Hasui carried on the traditional methods of Japanese craftsmanship in printing and choice of native landscape subjects, but his juxtaposing of colors and the atmospheric effects achieved by means of uneven inking of the blocks indicate his familiarity with French impressionism.

Among the Japanese, art has existed not as a luxury but as an inseparable part of daily living. Japanese woodblock prints were made for an energetic, literate,

and witty society. Restricted by law from ostentatious display in their material possessions and even in their clothing, the Japanese found in the entertainment of restaurants, the theater, the courtesans, and literature a relief from this mild oppression. The warm colors and graceful rhythms of the *ukiyo-e* prints that recorded their frivolities and their beautiful landscapes were the means of extending their pleasures. Because of the artist's skill in his craft, those pleasures are also extended to us.

Elaine Evans Dee



Katsukawa Shunshō

(1726–1792)

**The Actor Iwai Hanshirō IV in a
Female Role, Holding a Parasol**

About 1780

Hosoban, 32.5 x 14.2 cm.

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Robert H.
Patterson, 1941–31–152

Shunshō revived the art of theatrical prints and actor portraits at a moment when prints of fashionably dressed women had all but captured popular taste in Edo. His close-up views of individualized figures and decorative fabric patterns served as important examples for later artists, including his pupil Hokusai. In Japanese theater, as in Shakespeare's day, there were no actresses; only men were cast in Kabuki roles. Hanshiro's delicate facial features and elaborate hair styling have been exaggerated in the aim of femininity, and only the fabric covering the forehead identifies this figure as a male impersonating a female.

Utagawa Toyokuni I (1769–1825)

The Actors Sawamura Genosuke (in the role of Abe no Yasuna) and Segawa Rokō (in the role of Kuza no Ha)

About 1790

Hosoban, 32.2 x 14.7 cm.

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Robert H. Patterson, 1941–31–138



By isolating the actors from any background, Toyokuni emphasized personality in his prints rather than theatrical roles. In early prints, he often combined delicate facial features with broadly outlined bodies and costumes. Toward the turn of the century, his figure style became less and less refined. The willowy profile of the standing actor in this print is typical of Toyokuni's early works, as are the lines defining the seated figure's lap. The toppled mirror stand, probably overturned during a fit of passion, shows the same exaggerated attenuation as the figures.

Utagawa Toyokuni I (1769–1825)

**The Actor Hagino Isaburō as a
Samurai Drawing his Sword**

About 1815; publisher, Matsuasu
Hosoban, 31.5 x 14.3 cm.

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Robert H.
Patterson, 1941–31–142

The object of Hagino Isaburō's cross-eyed glare lies somewhere outside the confines of the print. With one hand on the hilt of his sword, the other on the handle, and elbow poised, the figure conveys all the combative energy appropriate to a samurai. The bright stripes and stylized angularity of his robes contribute to the drama of the composition.





**Mataunami Shigeoki, after
Tatsukata Matsuoka**

**Instructions for Wearing the
Twelve Layers of Imperial Court
Costume (*Jūni tan chakuyō zu*)**

1801

33.8 x 50.8 cm.

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Robert H.
Patterson, 1941-31-58

According to the inscription on the print, Shigeoki was the apprentice of Tatsukata Matsuoka who worked on the island of Kyshu.

The full dress (*mononogu*) worn on formal occasions by the empress and court ladies of higher ranks consisted of twelve individual items. First came the chemise of white silk, which was short and tucked in at the waist. Over this were four robes identical in shape, each showing at the collar, hems, and sleeves a glimpse of the one next below it. These garments were of rich silk, their colors and patterns being subject to regulation that changed from time to time. Under these robes the lady wore a pair of voluminous "trousers" of stiff silk that more than covered her feet, on which she wore socks. Last came the wide-pleated train (*mo*) of thin, white,

embroidered silk, here showing the imperial design of phoenix birds and paulownia trees. Three pairs of streamers trailed freely at either side of the train.

The coiffure to be worn with this costume was also prescribed. It was parted in the middle and combed back into a long tail of seven feet or so, assisted by the addition of false hair, tied with silk, and at intervals bound with white paper cord. The gilt metal disk in her hair, shown here, was worn on special occasions.

The face and neck were painted white, and eyebrows painted high on the forehead replaced the shaved natural ones. A ceremonial fan decorated with ribbons and plum blossoms, or as in this print, pine sprays, completed the costume.



Utagawa Kuninaga (active by
1806–1829)

Beauties Impersonating the Eight *Sennin*

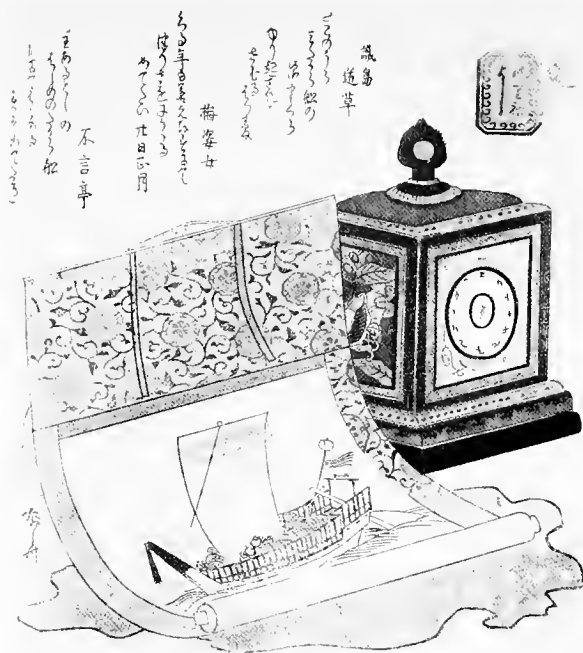
1818

Ōban triptych, 37.4 x 75 cm.

Purchase in memory of Mrs. Charles
B. Alexander, 1963–12–1

Sennin are immortals who have gained magical powers through asceticism and the teachings of Taoism. The *sennin* encountered so often in Chinese and Japanese lore are usually pictured as wizened old men with large ears, scanty clothing, and long beards. Kuninaga's triptych, however, illustrates eight of the *sennin*'s attributes, and here the Taoist ascetics appear in the guise of eight fashionable Edo beauties. In the left panel, Chokwaro releases a magic horse from a gourd; Oshikyo rides a white crane. The center panel depicts Kinko riding her carp-steed, Chinnan

conjuring a dragon, and Tekkai breathing forth a reproduction of herself. The right panel depicts Koreijin with a tiger, Chokiuka transforming cuttings from her robes into butterflies, and Gama playing with her toad.



Ryuryukyo Shinsai (1764?-1820)

Surimono: Painted Scroll and Clock

About 1800

Kakuban, 20.5 x 18.3 cm.

Gift of Mrs. William Greenough,
1941-49-53

This print is a particularly appropriate new year's greeting, with its clock and picture of the treasure ship which was the vehicle for the seven gods of good fortune: Hotei (contentment), Fukurokuju and Jurōjin (longevity), Bishamon and Daikoku (riches), Benten (beauty and music), and Ebisu (daily food).

Teisai Hokuba (1771-1844)

Surimono: Scene from a Noh Drama

About 1830

Kakuban, 20.6 x 18.3 cm.

Gift of Mrs. William Greenough,
1941-49-55

The scene showing a man holding out his string of Buddhist rosary beads before a masked demon who towers over him is doubtless drawn from a Noh drama. Noh is the classic, lyric, court drama of Japan, blending dance, pantomime, and music with moral instruction. The formula is rigid, the action symbolic and slow, and the language obscure and understated.





Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849)

Kajikazawa in Kai Province
(*Koshu Kajikazawa*)

From the series, *Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji* (*Fugaku Sanjūroku Kei*)
1823–31; publisher, Eijudo
Ōban, 26 x 37.8 cm.

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Robert H.
Patterson, 1941–31–117

The pure symmetry of Mt. Fuji's cone is a symbol of Japan's scenic beauty as well as of the spiritual significance of nature in a land so dominated by its topography. Here a lone fisherman and his young assistant are perched on a promontory overhanging pounding surf. The foamy crests recall Hokusai's most famous print, "The Great Wave off Kanagawa." By means of a single line, Hokusai suggests the serenity of Mt. Fuji rising above dense fog to preside over the landscape. The careful foreground arrangement of the jutting

crag, the stooping fisherman, and the extended lines of his net complete a triangle that repeats Fuji's symmetry, a compositional device that Hokusai frequently exploited in the other prints in this series.

The subdued tones of blue and green are also characteristic of Hokusai's work. His use of such broad areas of a single color was daring and, in the hands of a skillful printer, it allowed subtle gradations of tone that remain powerfully evocative.



Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849)
“Fuji-view” Fields (*Bishu Fujimigahara*) in Owari Province

From the series, Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji (*Fugaku Sanjūroku Kei*) 1823–1831; publisher, Eijudo Ōban, 25 x 37.1 cm.

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Robert H. Patterson, 1941–31–113

The province of Owari is considerably west of Edo, yet the silhouette of Mt. Fuji is still visible on the horizon in Hokusai's famous view. An aging cooper with a caulking brush kneels inside the huge tub which frames him and the diminished peak in the distance. Hokusai worked for many years as a book illustrator and published several manuals of drawing techniques.

He was a master of depicting the human figure. The few lines that define the old man's bony limbs and whimsical facial expression are typical of Hokusai's angular style of drawing.

Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849)

Scene from the *Chūshingura*
(The Loyal League of Forty-seven Ronin)

About 1800

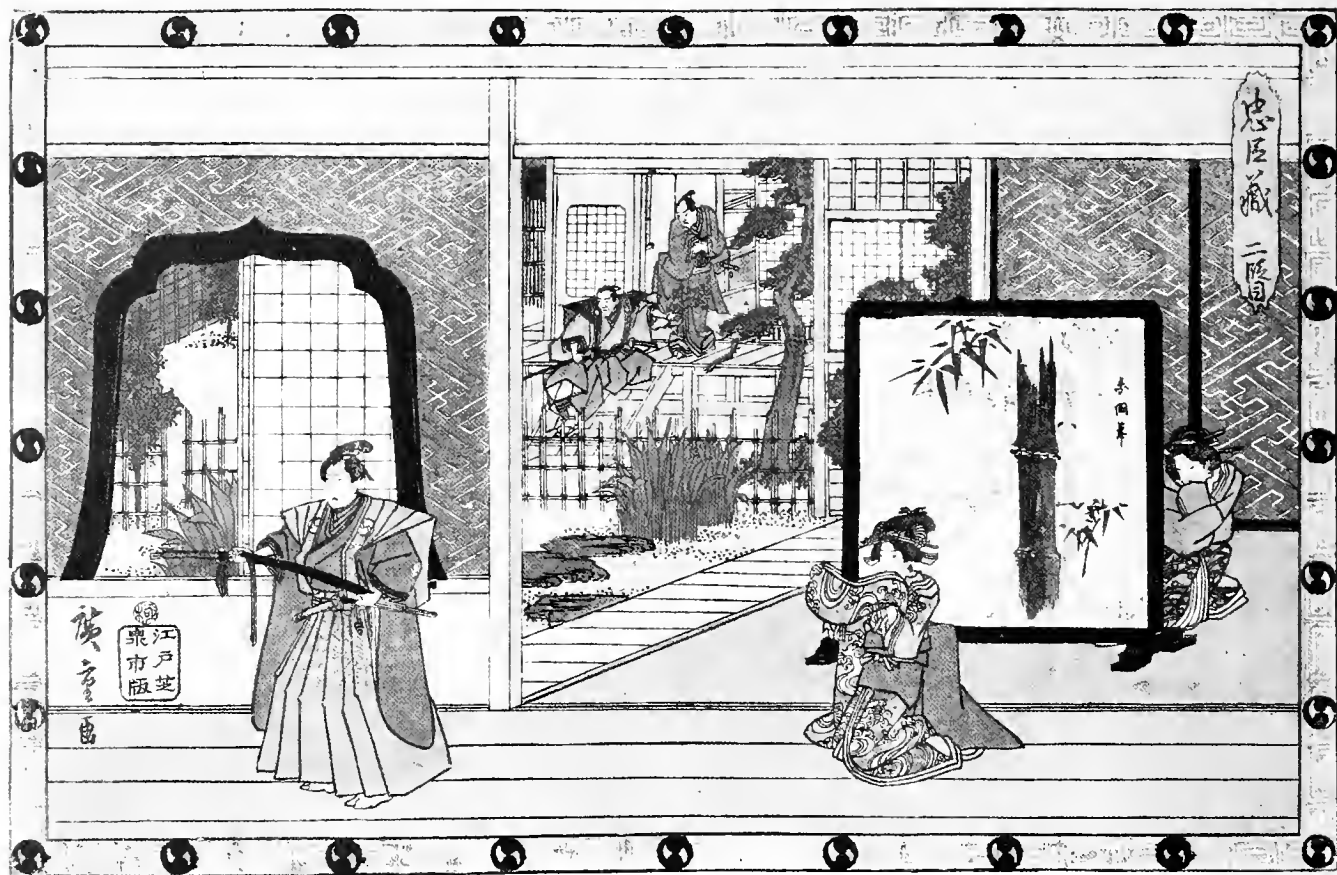
Aiban, 34.3 x 22.6 cm

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Robert H. Patterson, 1941–31–111

The most popular Kabuki drama, *Chūshingura*, celebrates all the qualities of unquestioning loyalty, devotion to a superior, and courtly etiquette that are intensely Japanese. The eleven-act play, based on an actual event that occurred in 1701, presents the tale of Hangan (sometimes called Yenya), a nobleman who draws his sword against another nobleman, Moronao, after enduring his ceaseless insults. The act violated the laws of the court, and thus Hangan was condemned to commit *seppuku*, the nobility's ritual of suicide. His retainers became *ronin*, or men without a leader, and the forty-seven who remained loyal formed a league under Oboshi Yuranosuke, Hangan's devoted chief retainer, to seek revenge on the wicked Moronao. Having avenged the death of their lord, the forty-seven *ronin* committed *seppuku* and were buried together.

In this night scene by Hokusai, Yuranosuke has disguised himself as a drunk asleep in the road with straw hat tossed aside, *geta* (wooden sandals) untied, and over-turned sake pot nearby. An unwitting samurai assaults the hero for his disgraceful appearance.





Andō Hiroshige (1797–1858)

Act II from the series,
Chūshingura (The Loyal League
of Forty-Seven Ronin)

1836; publisher, Senichi
Ōban, 24 x 36.4 cm.

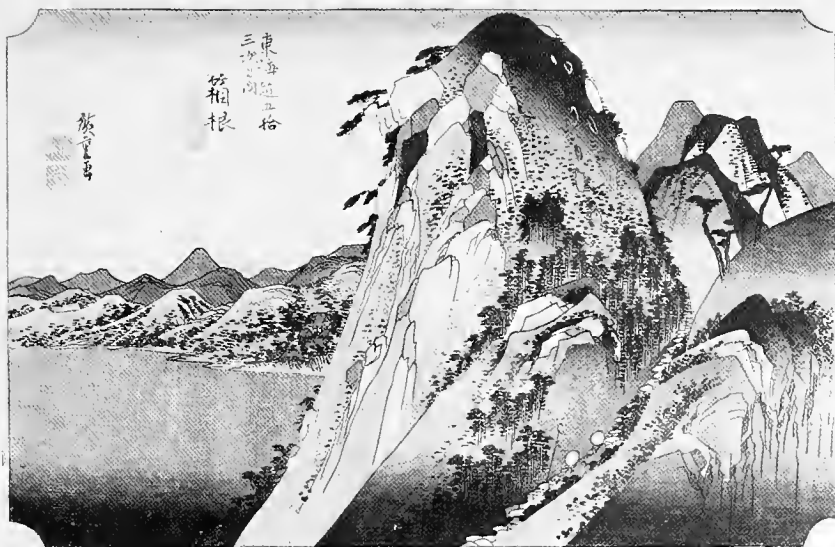
Purchase, in memory of Herman A.
Elsberg, 1962–197–1

In Hiroshige's series of sixteen prints showing scenes from the *Chūshingura*, each composition is enclosed in a fretwork border that incorporates the double *tomoe* crest (intersecting comma shapes) of Oishi Kuranosoke, the actual hero of the historical events. His name is thinly disguised in the play as Oboshi Yuranosuke.

The scene in Act II takes place in the residence of the nobleman Wakasa, a friend of Hangan's and enemy of Moronao. A pair of lovers who figure in the story is in the foreground, observed by the girl's mother hiding behind a screen. The bamboo design of

the screen bears the signature of Moto-oka, one of the names of the artist Okajima Rinsai who was believed to have been Hiroshige's first teacher.

On a veranda across the garden, Wakasa's attendant, Honzo, has just cut off a pine branch with his master's sword. By sheathing it without first wiping clean the thick, sticky pine pitch, Honzo hopes to prevent Wakasa from emulating Hangan's fatal mistake of drawing his sword against the villainous Moronao.



Andō Hiroshige (1797–1858)

Hakone, The Lake (*Hakone kosui*)

No. 11 from the series,
Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō
(*Tōkaidō Gōjūsan Tsugi*)

1834; publisher, Hōeidō

Oban, 22.8 x 35.3 cm.

Gift of Mary Rutherford Jay,

1948–134–11

Mt. Fuji is only one example of Japan's varied volcanic scenery. The region of Hakone is famous for rugged, volcanic terrain which is very different from the gradual slope of Mt. Fuji, visible from the lake. In Hiroshige's view, a *daimyō's* (noble's) procession with men carrying litters and banners winds its way through a narrow gorge beneath steep-faced peaks. Soil and vegetation appear as boldly colored patchwork above the travelers. Below, Lake Hakone extends past a small village to the foot of a distant mountain range.

19



Andō Hiroshige (1797–1858)

Yellow Dusk at Numazu (*Numazu kikure*)

No. 13 from the series,
Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō
(*Tōkaidō Gōjūsan Tsugi*)

1833–4; publisher, Hōeidō

Oban, 22.3 x 35 cm.

Gift of Mary Rutherford Jay,

1948–134–13

Following a narrow, riverside path, three travelers approach the village of Numazu by the light of the full moon. Its pale glow silhouettes the roadside trees but barely penetrates the forest on the opposite bank. The large mask that the man carries on his back identifies the group as pilgrims to the Shinto shrine of Kōmpira on the island of Shinkoku.



Andō Hiroshige (1797–1858)

Kambara, Night Snow (*Kambara, yoru no yuki*)

No. 16 from the series,
Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō
(*Tōkaidō Gojūsan Tsugi*)
1834; publisher, Takenouchi-Hōeidō
Ōban, 22.7 x 35.4 cm.
Gift of Mary Rutherford Jay,
1948–134–16

The night view of Kambara under heavy snow is one of the most famous prints of the Tōkaidō series. Three peasants trudge on undeterred by the snow-covered surface of the highway. One figure in *geta* (wooden sandals) covers his head with a half-closed umbrella. The configuration of village rooftops subtly complements the shape of the distant mountains and closely resembles Hiroshige's rhythmic treatment of rooflines in other views from this series.



Andō Hiroshige (1797–1858)

Utsu Mountain, Okabe (*Okabe, Utsu no yama*)

No. 22 from the series,
Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō
(*Tōkaidō Gojūsan Tsugi*)
1833–4; publisher, Hōeidō
Ōban, 23.6 x 36.4 cm.
Gift of Mary Rutherford Jay,
1948–134–22

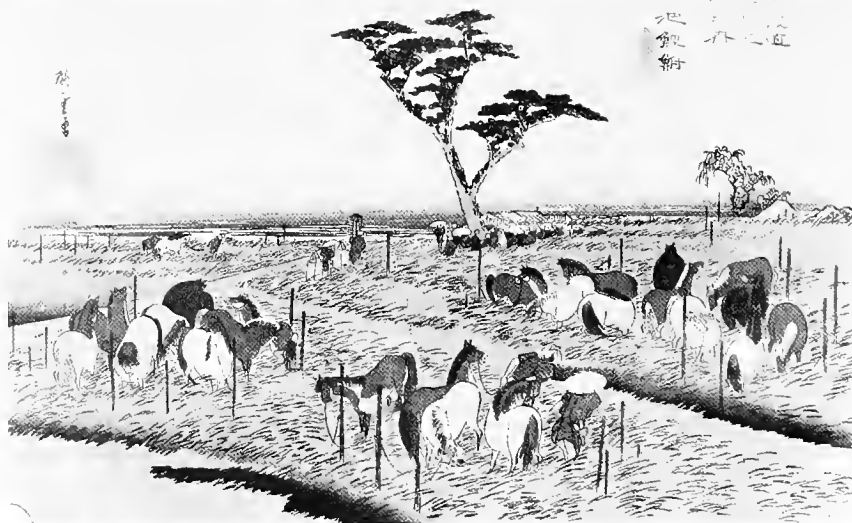
The stone embankment of a mountain stream provides a road for travelers ascending from both sides of this mountain pass. The walls of the gorge support a few gnarled trees which catch the sunlight from the overlook. Dark flecks on the mountains beyond the roofs of the village of Okabe suggest the same meager forestation. The subtle gradations of green, blue, and gray are crucial in this print, for they alone create depth and texture in the landscape.

Andō Hiroshige (1797–1858)

Chiryu, The Great Summer Horse Fair (*Chiryu, shuka uma-ichi*)

No. 40 from the series,
Fifty-Three Stations of the Tōkaidō
(*Tōkaidō Gojūsan Tsugi*)
1833–4; publisher, Hōeidō
Ōban, 22.9 x 35.1 cm.
Gift of Mary Rutherford Jay,
1948–134–40

Grazing in a field of tall grass, groups of tethered horses await the arrival of the buyers who gather under a lone, tall tree.

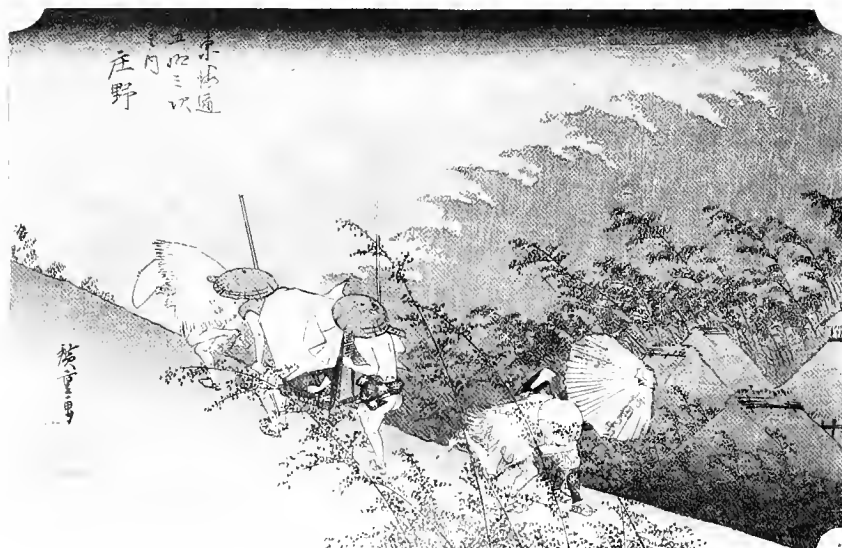


Andō Hiroshige (1797–1858)

Shōno, White Rain (*Shōno, haku-u*)

No. 46 from the series,
Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō
(*Tōkaidō Gojūsan Tsugi*)
1833–4; publisher, Hōeidō
Ōban, 22.5 x 34.7 cm.
Gift of Mary Rutherford Jay,
1948–134–46

Hiroshige's image of driving sheets of rain, branches bowing in a gale, and travelers running for cover is one of the most famous of all Japanese prints. Climbing a road past the village, porters transporting a passenger by *kago* (an open-sided sedan chair) pass two figures who dash headlong into the wind and rain. One grips the brim of his straw hat; the other proceeds blindly behind the cover of his umbrella. The randomly intersecting lines of rain and the separately printed grey bands of foliage enhance our sensation of the squall and demonstrate Hiroshige's complete mastery of the woodblock medium.





Andō Hiroshige (1797–1858)

**Sakanoshita, Fudesute Mountain
(Sakanoshita, Fudesute mine)**

No. 49 from the series,
Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō
(*Tōkaidō Gojūsan Tsugi*)
1833–4; publisher, Hōeidō
Ōban, 23.9 x 36.7 cm.
Gift of Mary Rutherford Jay,
1948–134–49

At the right, a group of guests rests in a rude shelter after a mountain ascent. One, with brush and paper in hand, inspired by the view of the mountain across the chasm, is apparently writing a poem which will, no doubt, be hung from the roof beams in company with the literary efforts of previous travelers.

Hiroshige's genius as a draftsman is evident in the way the facial expression of the man at the edge of the precipice,

gazing in awe at the landscape, is captured in the most summary and economical terms. The artist's knowledge of Chinese painting is revealed through his rendering of the rocky crags across the chasm.



Andō Hiroshige (1797–1858)

**The Suidō Bridge and
Suruga Plain (*Suidōbashi*,
Surugadai)**

From the series, One Hundred Views of
Edo (*Meisho Edo Hyakkei*)

1857; publisher, Uoei

Ōban, 33.8 x 22.2 cm.

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Robert H.
Patterson, 1941–31–297

In this bird's-eye view of the Suruga plain, huge paper kites hang from poles, like wind socks, and numerous banners appear among the rooftops in the distance. During Boys' Festival (May 5), it is appropriate that carp dominate the skyline, for they symbolize perseverance to the Japanese. Hiroshige repeatedly organized his upright compositions around some striking foreground element, and the carp follows this formula. It creates depth through the use of flat elements, simultaneously drawing the viewer into the print and stressing the bold surface pattern traditionally associated with Japanese woodblock prints.

Andō Hiroshige (1797–1858)

Ferry at Kawaguchi and the
Zenkōji Temple (*Kawaguchi no
watashi to Zenkōji*)

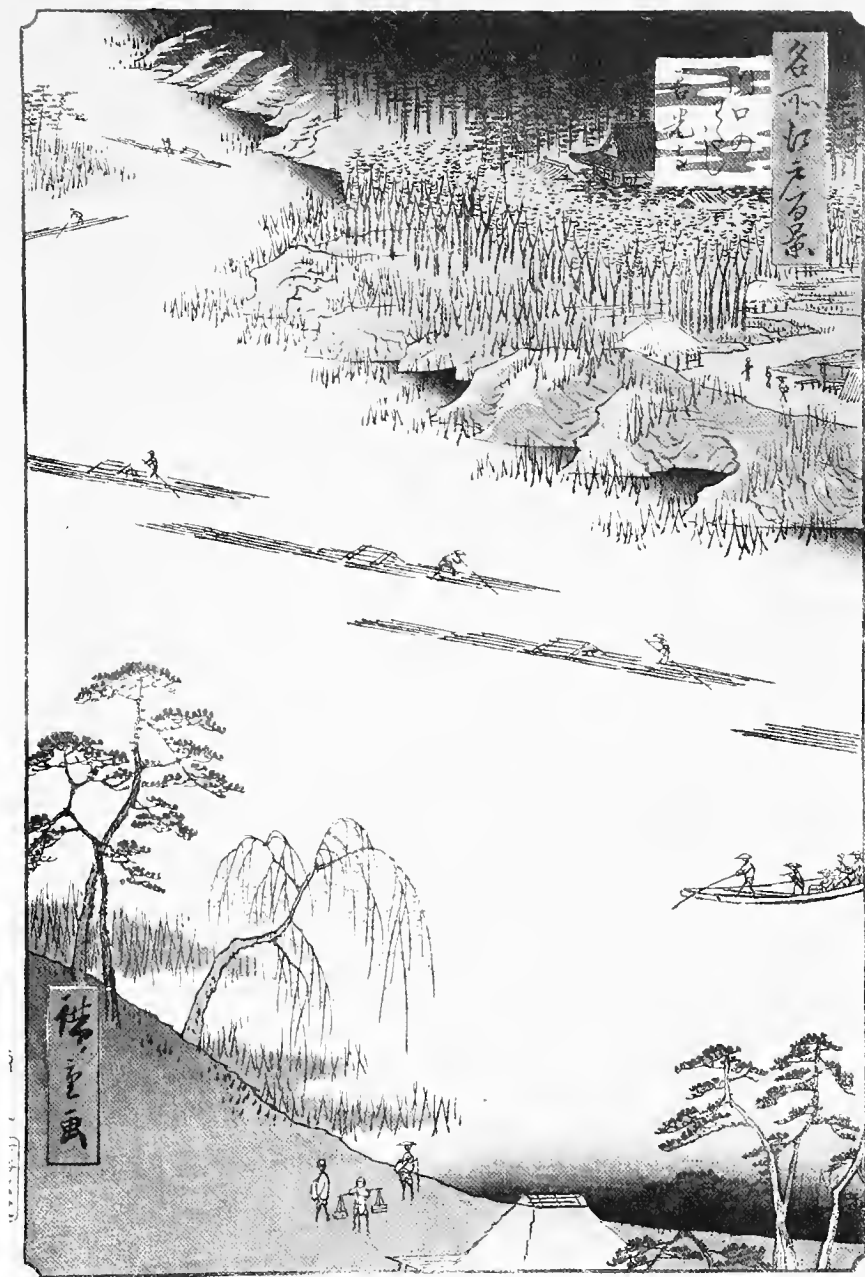
From the series, One Hundred Views of
Edo (*Meisho Edo Hyakkei*)

1857; publisher, Uoei

Ōban, 33.9 x 22.5 cm.

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Robert H.
Patterson, 1941–31–275

As the ferry-boat full of passengers
crosses a stream, lumber rafts pass,
propelled by punters in straw hats. The
Zenkōji Temple appears on the oppo-
site shore, partially obscured by a dense
grove of trees.



Andō Hiroshige (1797–1858)

**The Eko-in Temple and the
Moto-yanagi Bridge, Ryōgoku**
(*Ryōgoku Ekō-in, Moto-yanagibashi*)

From the series, One Hundred Views of
Edo (*Meisho Edo Hyakkei*)

1857; publisher, Uoei

Oban, 34 x 22.3 cm.

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Robert H.
Patterson, 1941–31–287



The flags that hang from the tall, wooden scaffolding indicate that a wrestling match is underway. Beyond lies the Sumida River with junks and barges passing, and beyond them is the Moto-yanagi Bridge. Snow covers the distant Mt. Fuji. As in other examples from the same series, a vertical element dominates the foreground of this print. Compositional effect was clearly more important to the artist than factual documentation, for the posts of the tower rise somewhat awkwardly out of the rooftops below them.

Andō Hiroshige (1797–1858)

**The Gateway to the Kinryūzan
Temple, Asakusa (*Asakusa,
Kinryūzan*)**

From the series, One Hundred Views of
Edo (*Meisho Edo Hyakkei*)

1856; publisher, Uoei

Ōban, 34 x 22.5 cm.

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Robert H.
Patterson, 1941–31–291

Snow and moonlight scenes have always
been among the most sought-after
prints by Hiroshige, and this well
known view of the Asakusa Temple is
frequently displayed and reproduced.
By partially framing the temple within
a doorway and including a large paper
lantern in the upper third of the print,
Hiroshige defies the boundary be-
tween the viewer's space and the picture
space. The low vantage point places us
in the courtyard among the people who
approach the temple through the snow.



Andō Hiroshige (1797–1858)

**The Great Wave at Satta Beach,
Suruga**

From the series, The Thirty-Six Views
of Fuji (*Fuji Sanjūroku Kei*)

1858; publisher, Tsutaya Kichizō

Ōban, 33.6 x 22.2 cm.

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Robert H.
Patterson, 1941–31–120



Hiroshige's print of a "great wave" automatically recalls Hokusai's monumental depiction of the same subject published almost thirty years before. In contrast to Hokusai's version, in which a wall of water towers above man and mountain, Hiroshige's boats sail on peaceful waters, safe from the crest of the wave in the foreground, which only appears to crash down upon them. Here Fuji and the nearby cliffs equal the wave in height. The impact of the print relies on the sweeping curl of the wave that stretches from margin to margin and the agitated tops of the swells in the foreground.

Keisai Eisen (1790–1848)

Mariko

From the series, Courtesans and Post-
ing Stations (*Keisei dochu sugoroku*)
About 1830; publisher, Tsutaya
Kichizō

Ōban, 35.4 x 24.3 cm.

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Robert H.
Patterson, 1941–31–148

Although Eisen collaborated with
Hiroshige on the series “Sixty-nine
Stations of the Kiso Highway,” he is
probably better known for his prints of
beautiful women. In this series he has
accomplished a combination of the two
genres. The view in the cartouche at
the left is of Mariko, one of the fifty-
three stations on the Tōkaidō road,
and a graceful courtesan in her many-
patterned costume and elaborate hair
ornaments dominates the composition.

From the seventeenth century on,
brothels in Japan were strictly con-
trolled by the government. In Edo, as
in other towns, the pleasure quarters
were a conspicuous feature of city life
and courtesans (as well as their patrons)
supplied ready-made subjects for prints
that were in great demand. There was a
strict hierarchy among the courtesans
and only a few achieved “highest rank-
ing.” The geishas, ranked lower than
courtesans, were skilled in music and
dancing, but beauty of appearance was
a prime requisite for both.





Utagawa Kunisada (1786–1864)

The Actor Matsumoto Kōshirō Leaping through a Wall

About 1840

Oban, 38.8 x 26.5 cm.

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Maxime
Hermanos, 1966–7–30

The Kabuki theater took definite shape during the brilliant flowering of culture and civilization under Tokugawa rule. Printmakers were directly affected by the demand for advertisements, portraits of actors, and scenes from popular plays. The collecting of actors' portraits became the rage.

Until the nineteenth century, when they became more versatile, actors were confined to a single kind of role — villain, hero, or female. Actors trained their own children in their own roles, or adopted boys in order to carry on the name, a practice still followed in Japan today. Matsumoto Kōshirō VII, one of whose predecessors is portrayed here, and who was considered one of the greatest Kabuki actors, died only twenty years ago.

Since Kunisada sometimes signed himself as Toyokuni (two other artists used this name), definite attribution often becomes difficult, and one must rely exclusively on stylistic evidence. In this example with a Toyokuni signature, the hasty conception of rocks and foliage, along with the convention of curving and oddly jointed fingers and toes, strongly suggest that Kunisada was the artist.

Utagawa Kunisada (1786–1864)

Hanashigomano Chokichi
Drawing his Sword

About 1850; publisher, Tsutaya
Kichizō

Ōban, 36.2 x 25.2 cm.

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William
Franklin Mitchell, 1955–111–86

The influence of the theater on Japanese life was pervasive. Not only did the plots and language of the plays affect behavior and speech, but fabric design and hair styles of favorite actors were emulated. The boldly striped or checked fabrics such as this actor wears are now called *genroku* after the Genroku period (1688–1704) when these patterns became most popular.



Utagawa Kunisada (1786–1864)

Man Crossing a Bridge in the Snow

1854

Ōban, 35.9 x 25.9 cm. (part of a triptych)

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William Franklin Mitchell, 1955–111–85



Although Kunisada's print reveals some awkward handling of the spatial relationships between the figure and the architectural elements of the background, and a decidedly lumpy rendering of the falling snow flakes, the figure itself shows the sophistication and attention to detail of which the artist was capable.

The subject wears a lined kimono against the rigors of the weather, over which for further warmth he wears a *haori*, a short coat open at the front and loosely fastened across the chest with silk cords. As is traditional, his *haori* is of striped fabric, and is decorated with family crests. The *geta* (wooden sandals) he wears are raised high enough from the ground to protect his feet and the hem of his kimono from the snow. Until the end of the eighteenth century, only men carried umbrellas in Japan.

Utagawa Kunisada (1786–1864)

The Sumo Wrestler, Koyanagi Tsunekichi

About 1840; publisher, Joshuya
Ōban, 37.5 x 25.5 cm.
Transfer from the Cooper-Hewitt
Library, 1957–148–65

To the Japanese, wrestling (*sumo*) is not a mere feat of strength. It has always been regarded as an effective medium for spiritual as well as physical development of young men. The wrestling match itself progresses through a series of rituals performed by the two contestants. The technique of throwing an opponent in the ring or ejecting him from it is complicated, but the two hundred or more hand motions employed by the wrestler are based on three fundamental methods — thrusting (with the palms), pushing (with the fingers), and clinching and grappling.

The wrestler in Kunisada's print is shown standing in a square ring of hard clay bounded with bales of straw. His long topknot indicates that he is a wrestler of first rank. The floor of the ring appears to be dotted with the salt, symbolic of purity, which is thrown into the ring by the wrestlers before the match. Koyanagi Tsunekichi, however, is wearing his ceremonial, decorated loin cloth, thus it does not appear that he is about to engage in a contest but, rather, has posed for his portrait in suitable attire.

Kunisada has magnified the figure's bulk by nearly filling the page with it, stressing the lighter areas of the upper torso, and emphasizing the broad, horizontal stripes of the loin cloth.





Ichiusai Kunihisa (1832–1891)

Two Actors, Ichikawa Kichiyoshi and Bandō Hikosaburō, under a Waterfall

1862; publishers, Santsū Itoshō and Fukabori Iccho

Ōban, 36.2 x 25.2 cm.

Purchase in memory of Edward Ringwood Hewitt, Edith Wetmore, and others, 1968–96–1

It seems there was no limit to the invention of stage effects, including waterfalls, in Kabuki theater. At a time when Shakespearean plays were being performed in comparatively simple theaters, the Japanese had revolving stages, trap door devices for precipitous exits and entrances, and elaborate lighting, all within a highly ritualized setting.

In the tradition of Hokusai and Eisen before him, Kunihisa has ably solved the difficult problem of representing a volume of water within a rigid two-dimensional format, and with a limited range of colors.



Kawase Hasui (1883–1957)

Zaimoku-jima at Matsushima

1933; publisher, Watanabe

Ōban, 39.3 x 26.5 cm.

Gift of Asaka Matsuoka, 1960–68–3

The traditional methods of woodblock printing have persisted into the twentieth century. Hasui's treatment of water demonstrates a technical facility that belies the laborious process of multiple printing and registration. (This print required twenty-five superimposed printings from twenty blocks.) Matsushima Bay, long famous as one of Japan's "Three Great Views," is dotted with volcanic islands shaped by eroding wind and water. An earlier guidebook aptly describes the view as if the author were looking at Hasui's print:

"On a perfect day in June, when white-sailed junks drift lazily over the translucent water and blend their ghostly shadows in the depths with those of the billowy galleons that ride majestically across the airy sea above, the bay seems touched by the magic hand of some transcendent genius, and its beauty is one that lingers long in the mind." (*Terry's Guide to the Japanese Empire*, Boston and New York, 1920, p. 312.)



Kawase Hasui (1883–1957)

Saishoin Temple at Hirosaki

About 1920

Ōban, 39.3 x 26.4 cm.

Gift of Asaka Matsuoka, 1960–68–2

Hirosaki is in the northernmost province of Japan, thus it is not surprising that this modern landscape print expresses the ever-popular Japanese theme of snow. A lone figure under an umbrella passes before the temple as sunlight penetrates the snow just enough to tint the branches of the tall trees.

Hasui often uses various textures and densities of ink, some quite transparent and others opaque, and here the technique skillfully suggests intermittent sunlight, seen through the lightly falling snow, and the blue shadows that cover the ground.

36 **Brief Bibliography**

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Japanese prints are usually classified according to shape and size.

Type of print	Approximate size (<i>in centimeters</i>)
Ōban	39.3 x 25.3
Aigan	33.3 x 22.7
Chūban	29.3 x 19
Hosoban	30.3 x 15
Koban	21.2 x 15.1
Hashiraban	66.7 x 21.2
Chū-tanzaku	38 x 13
Hashira-e	73 x 12

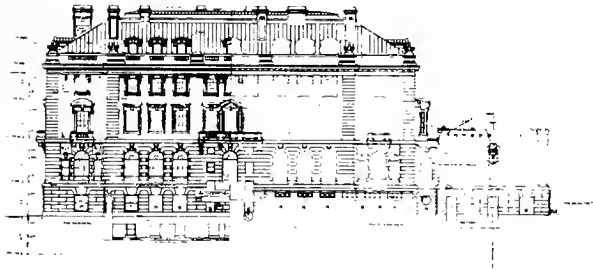
Surimono sizes:

Kakuban	20.5 x 18.3
Nagaban	15-20 x 10-15

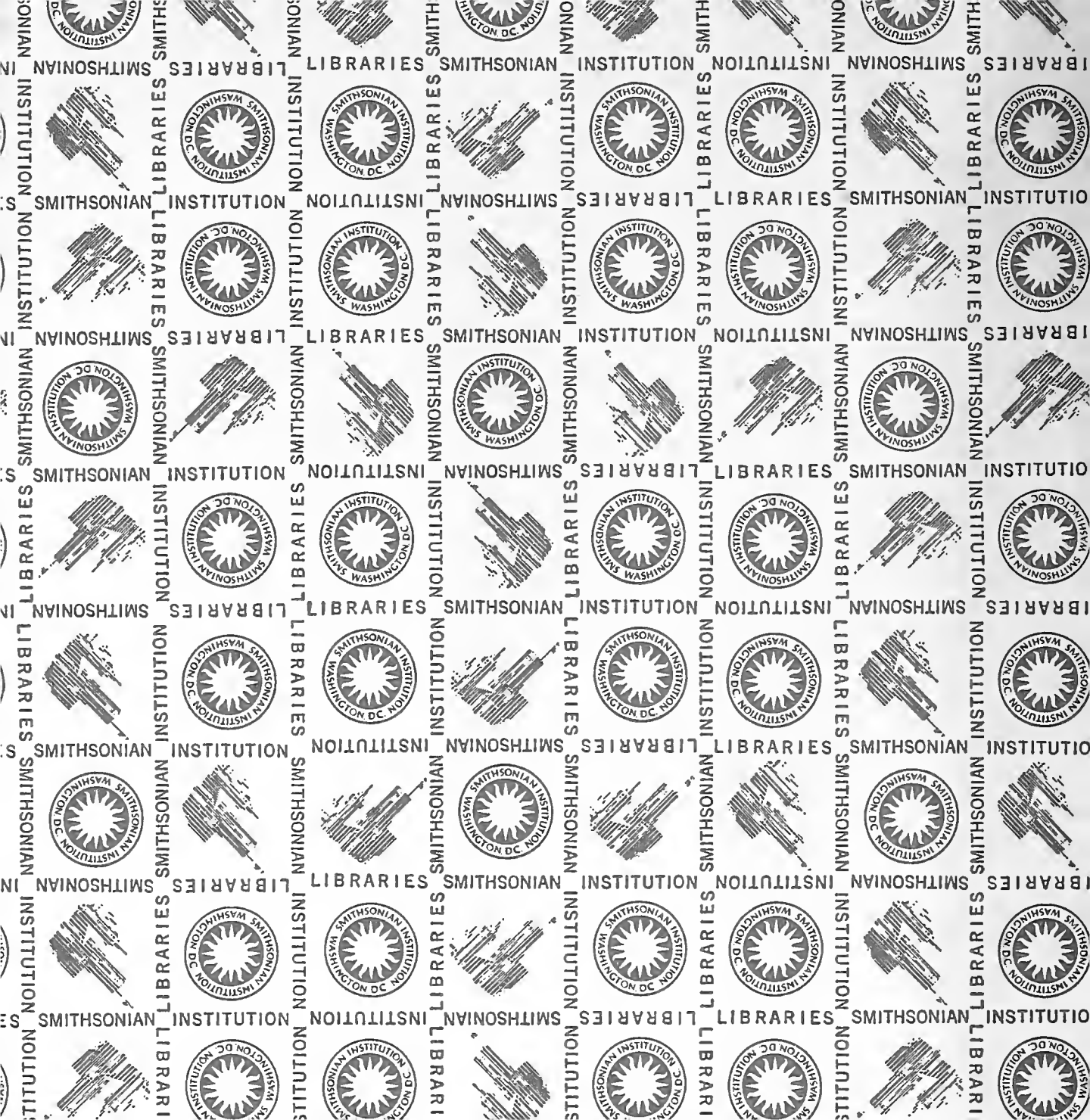
All of the prints illustrated are *nishiki-e* (full color prints).

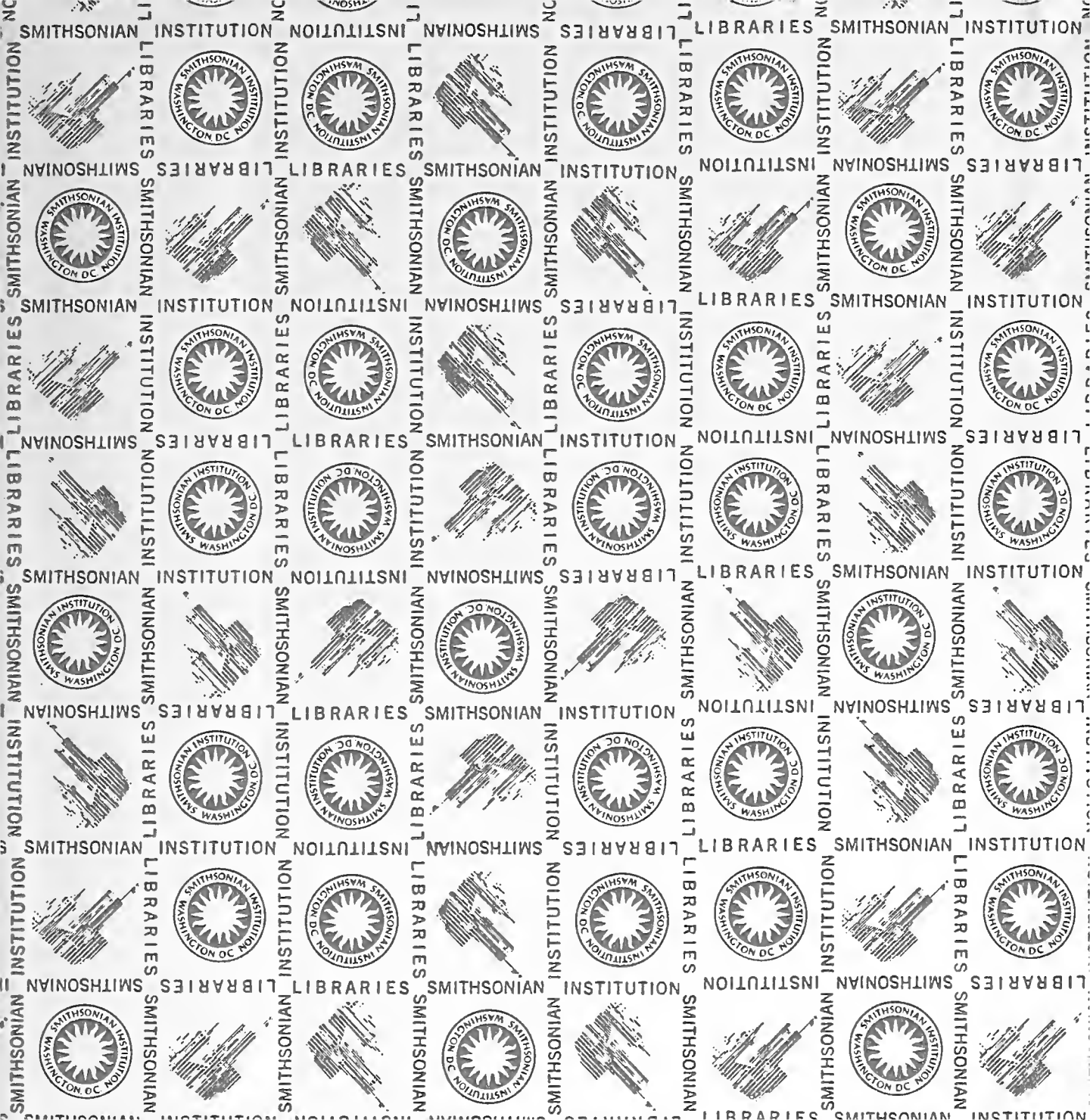
Spellings and dates follow the system in Laurance P. Roberts, *A Dictionary of Japanese Artists* (New York, 1977)

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